

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-10 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4656
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH
AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION ARITHMETIC

1. THIS MESSAGE IS ABOUT THE ARITHMETIC OF TOMORROW'S GENERAL ELECTION. AT STAKE ARE 635 SEATS. IN FEBRUARY, LABOR WON 301 SEATS, THE CONSERVATIVES 297, LIBERALS 14, AND OTHERS 23.
2. SINCE THERE IS A GREATER LIKELIHOOD THIS TIME THAN LAST THAT THE LIBERALS WOULD ENTER INTO COALITION WITH THE CONSERVATIVES OR AT LEAST GIVE A CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT TACIT SUPPORT, LABOR MUST TAKE SIX SEATS FROM THE CONSERVATIVES AND/OR LIBERALS TO GAIN THE EDGE (307-305)

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OVER ANY CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL COMBINATION.

3. EVERY ADDITIONAL SEAT OVER 307 THAT LABOR WINS WILL OF COURSE CONSTITUTE THAT MUCH MORE INSURANCE AGAINST ANY POSSIBLE NON-LABOR COMBINATIONS (E.G., CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL-ULSTERMEN), UNTIL AT 318 IT REACHES AN ABSOLUTE OVERALL MAJORITY.

4. SINCE LABOR IS NOT EVEN CONTESTING 12 SEATS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, AND SINCE THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS HAVE BY ALL ACCOUNTS INCREASED IN STRENGTH AND THREATEN TO TAKE SEATS AWAY FROM LABOR (AND THE TORIES), LABOR'S ONLY REAL PROSPECT FOR SECURING THE SEATS IT NEEDS IS TO TAKE THEM DIRECTLY FROM THE TORIES. ESTIMATES VARY SOMEWHAT, BUT ALL ELSE BEING EQUAL, A STRAIGHT SWING FROM CONSERVATIVE TO LABOR OF TWO PERCENT WOULD NET LABOR ROUGHLY 26 TO 28 SEATS.

5. SINCE THE OPINION POLLS REGISTER SWINGS TO LABOR OF FROM TWO TO SEVEN PERCENT, WILSON WOULD APPEAR TO BE HOME SAFE. "ALL ELSE", HOWEVER, IS NOT "EQUAL." THE PRESENCE OF THIRD AND FOURTH PARTY CANDIDATES IN MOST RACES MAKES IT HAZARDOUS TO PREDICT THE EFFECT OF SWINGS BETWEEN THE MAJOR PARTIES WITH ANY ACCURACY. FURTHERMORE, THE VERY SIZE OF THE LABOR LEAD SUGGESTED BY THE POLLS MAY LULL MANY LABOR VOTERS INTO STAYING HOME TOMORROW AND FRIGHTEN MANY LIBERAL SYMPATHIZERS INTO VOTING CONSERVATIVE.

6. THESE CAVEATS NOTWITHSTANDING, IT STILL SEEMS VERY LIKELY THAT LABOR WILL BE RETURNED TO OFFICE. THE MAJOR UNCERTAINTY CENTERS ON THE SIZE OF ITS PROSPECTIVE MAJORITY.

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